ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for the

BLM / Pacifica Interpretive Trail

(EA# OR110-01-048)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

September 2001

Dear Reader:

We appreciate your interest in the BLM's public land management activities. We also appreciate your taking the time to review this environmental assessment (EA). If you would like to provide us with written comments regarding this project or EA, please send them to Abbie Jossie, Grants Pass Field Manager, at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504. If you would prefer, you may also email comments to me at: *or110mb@.or.blm.gov*.

If confidentiality is of concern to you, please be aware that comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review or may be held in a file available for public inspection and review. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this clearly at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or officials of organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Abbie Jossie
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: *Grants Pass* FY & REPORT # EA Number OR-110-01-048

ACTION/TITLE: ***BLM/Pacifica Interpretive Trail***
LOCATION: T.38S. R.5W. Section 11; Willamette Meridian, Josephine County, Oregon
Two parcels of 40 acres (SW1/4SW1/4) and 80 acres (N1/2NE1/4)

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GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

BLM / Pacifica Interpretive Trail

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Chapter 1
Purpose of and Need for Action

A. Introduction

The purpose of this environmental assessment (EA) is to assist in the decision making process by assessing the environmental and human affects resulting from implementing the proposed action and/or alternatives. This EA will also assist in determining if an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This EA tiers to the following documents:

(1) Final EIS and Record of Decision dated June 1995 for the Medford District Resource Management Plan (October 1994) (RMP);
(2) Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (February 1994);
(3) Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, and attachment A entitled Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 1994) ("The Northwest Forest Plan") (NFP); and
(4) Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001).

Planning for this project also draws from the following documents:

(1) Williams Creek Watershed Analysis (BLM, Medford District, March 1996);
(2) Applegate Adaptive Management Area: Ecosystem Health Assessment (USDI/USDA, September 1994);
(3) Applegate Adaptive Management Area Guide (USDI/USDA, September 1998);
(4) Applegate River Watershed Assessment: Aquatic, Wildlife, and Special Plant Habitat (USDI/USDA, June 1995);
(5) Words into Action: A Community Assessment of the Applegate Valley (RIEE, May 1994);
(6) Revised Standards and Guidelines for the Adaptive Management Area System (Regional Ecosystem Office, May 2000)
(7) Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and Pacifica: a Garden of the Siskiyous (November 2000) (MOU).

B. Purpose of and Need for the Proposal

The purpose of the proposed project is to create an interpretive trail on BLM lands and adjacent private land. The need for the action is based upon on the November 2000 MOU between the BLM

and Pacifica Corporation, owner of the adjacent property. The MOU includes as one of its objectives to create, in partnership, "public information and awareness programs that interpret and disseminate information regarding BLM's multiple use and sustained yield management mandate, and responsible stewardship of our natural resources." The MOU also identifies one of the ways of furthering the purposes of the agreement is the "establishing recreational hiking trails, interpretive sites and interpretive materials."

C. Project Location

The general location of the proposed project is shown on Map 1 (All maps are located in Appendix A.). The project area is located in Josephine County near the communities of Williams and Provolt in the Williams watershed. Two BLM parcels of 40 and 80 acres are contiguous with Pacifica's property (the old Messinger farm).

D. Issues and Concerns Relevant to the Project

A variety of issues and concerns were identified during the initial scoping of this project. These were raised by the project planning team, Pacifica employees, and several adjacent landowners. In addition, the EA for the Scattered Apples Forest Management Project provided a set of broader issues specific to the Williams Creek watershed.

In 2000, as a part of Josephine County's review of Pacifica's application for a zone change, the county held a public hearing to solicit public comment on the proposal. A number of issues relevant to the present project were raised.

The pertinent issues identified for this project and which were used in the design of the proposed action are:

1. There are few low elevation, year around universally accessible trails in the Williams Valley.
2. Increased recreational use in this rural interface / wildland area may increase fire risk.
3. There is Townsend Big Eared bat habitat in the project area. Increased recreational use could disturb the habitat or lead to harassment of the bats.
4. A mine adit and vent shaft pose potential safety hazards to recreationists.
5. Adjacent landowners may be disturbed by the sites, sounds, and activity of some recreational users of the BLM parcels. Garbage, sanitation, motorized vehicles, and noise problems could arise as a result of increased public use.
6. The project could result in traffic increases on Water Gap Road.
7. Very high forest stand densities exist in some portions of the BLM land in the project area.
8. Forest conditions on a portion of the project area appear may provide suitable habitat for northern spotted owls and great gray owls.

E. Land Use Allocation and Objectives

The BLM portion of the project area is located within the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA) land allocation. The project area also partially located within the riparian reserve allocation. The broader management objectives for these land allocations are spelled out in the NFP and the Medford District RMP.

Chapter 2
Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Introduction

This chapter describes the proposed action and alternatives that are addressed and analyzed in this environmental assessment.

B. Alternative 1: No Action Alternative

In this EA document, the "no-action" alternative is defined as not implementing any aspect of the proposed action alternative(s). Defined this way, the no action alternative also serves as a baseline or reference point for evaluating the environmental effects of the action alternatives. Inclusion of this alternative is done without regard to whether or not it is consistent with the Medford District RMP.

The no action alternative is not a "static" alternative. Implicit in it is a continuation of the environmental conditions and trends that currently exist or are occurring within the project area. This would include trends such as vegetation succession and consequent wildlife habitat changes, rates of erosion, trends in fire hazard changes, OHV use, *etc.*.

C. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

1. Introduction/Objective

The objective of this alternative is to construct a system of interactive, natural-resource based interpretive trails on BLM land that is integrated with similar trails on Pacifica's property. The objectives of the trails and future interpretive efforts include:

- Provide easy access to a microcosm of the Oregon Klamath Province flora for learning and enjoyment;
- Provide a moderately rated universally accessible trail;
- Provide interactive interpretation of the plant ecology including fire ecology and disturbance;
- Provide interpretation of the natural and cultural features of Williams Valley;
- Provide interpretation of Pacifica and BLM's past, present, and future land uses;
- Provide recreation hiking opportunities; and
- Provide all season opportunity for the above activities.

2. Trail location

a. Trailhead / Parking

The primary trail head and parking area would be sited on Pacifica land near the main Water Gap Road entrance to their property (See Map 2). This access to the Watergap county road is approved by Josephine County and has been developed to their standards. Pacifica has indicated that this trail

head would be open during daylight periods year around, with the exception of Thanksgiving and Christmas days. The entrance to this parking area and trail head would be gated and open during daylight hours. BLM - PACIFICA interpretive signing and PACIFICA sanitation facilities would be provided at this trailhead.

A secondary trailhead and parking for approximately 4-6 cars may be considered at some point in the future. This would be located on BLM land in Section 11 (SW1/4SW1/4) and is accessed directly from Water Gap Road. A parking lot here would require flattening and then surfacing with rock to permit all season use. (Any such work would be evaluated as an individual project in the future.)

2. Trail route

The proposed trail route is shown on Map 2. The route location is integrated with Pacifica's proposed and existing trails. Signs will be posted at points where the trail enters and leaves BLM lands to indicate land ownership.

The construction on BLM land would begin at an Interpretive Trail parking area and trail head on Pacifica land. The trail would then cross the 40-acre BLM parcel, utilizing several switchbacks to retain grade at 3% with a 3 foot width for a universally accessible trail. The trail crosses Camp Meeting Creek, a narrow intermittent creek, a short distance above the pond. A bridge and/or boardwalk will be constructed over the creek. From there, the trail would climb along the north edge of the pond where it leaves BLM land. Continuing on Pacifica property, the trail continues around the hill and stays in the forest on the east side of the slope. The view from this segment faces the open farm fields below and lower Williams Creek/Provolt area. The trail then exits the forest and crosses the old farm fields, passing by several ponds, then into a flat wooded area. Trails in this wooded area will use the narrow old roads before reentering the 80-acre BLM parcel to the north. The proposed trail would enter and exit the south side of this 80-acre parcel, leaving and reentering Pacifica property. The location within the BLM parcel would parallel Pennington Creek, an intermittent stream.

A shorter trail segment departing from the parking area to Pacifica's proposed "Rock Grotto" will also be constructed. This trail would continue onto BLM land, paralleling the pond and rejoining the main trail. This segment would not be universally accessible due to the steeper side slopes and excavation difficulties.

3. Trail standards

All of the trails constructed for persons with disabilities will meet the criteria and standards se forth in the publication *Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation: A Design Guide* (PLAE, Inc. 1993). This publication relates access to different levels of recreational opportunities in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) from primitive to urban. The degrees of access are identified as "easier", "moderate", "difficult" or "most difficult" and guidelines appropriate for each are presented.

The one mile portion of the trail in the 40 acre BLM parcel would be designed to be universally accessible. (See Map 2). Another one mile portion of the trail in the 80 acre parcel would also be accessible but would be developed to a lesser degree.

The trail tread would constructed to the standard of moderate difficulty for persons with disabilities. This level of accessibility is based primarily on inherent topography and options available for trail layout. Trail gradients will be from 0 to 8%, with a maximum of 14% for short (50') segments. In the 40 acre parcel, the trail width will be 36" with a hardened all-weather tread and 28 to 36". In the north 80 acre parcel the tread would be surfaced with crushed shale or bark chips. The trail tread will be out sloped (up to 3 inches) and rolled and dipped to promote drainage. The trail tread will constructed on a full bench prism with no fill slopes. All excavated debris would be scattered below the trail to blend with the natural landscape.

Where the proposed trail parallels or crosses the intermittent streams (Pennington Creek and Camp Meeting Creek) (See Map 2), the trail will be located and designed to have the least short and long-term impact on prevailing natural vegetative and channel conditions. An elevated ramp (*i.e.*, a bridge-like walkway) will be utilized where the Camp Meeting Creek channel is crossed. Where the trail is routed through the Riparian Reserve, the trail grade will be restricted to 3% or less.

4. Trail construction and signing

The trail would be built using both mechanized equipment (i.e., a small tractor/backhoe, chain saws, and other trail building machines) and hand tools. Use of mechanized trail building equipment will be restricted to dry season (June to September) and when consistent with safe operating periods per Oregon Department of Forestry's fire regulations. It is expected that the initiation of trail construction on the BLM parcels will begin within one year of a decision to proceed. Construction and interpretive signing is expected to be done within four years.

Directional and interpretive signing will be along the entire trail route (BLM and Pacifica). Interpretive and directional signing will be rustic, blending in with the natural environment. Interpretive topics would include botanical, cultural, ecological, historical, multiple use, other physical and biological features, and explanations of natural processes occurring in these environs. Interpretive materials would be professionally prepared by wide array of educators and specialists. The interpretive effort would be oriented to all ages and a variety of interests.

5. Permitted uses

The following uses would be permissible on all portions of the trail: hiking and day use. Motorized wheelchairs would be permitted. All other forms of motorized vehicles would be prohibited. Mountain bicycles would also not be permitted. Equestrian use would not be permitted on the trail systems. Campfires and camping would not be permitted.

The BLM administered land in the project area is within the Applegate AMA and 95% is a part of the BLM's forest management land base. Forest management activities (e.g., fire and fuel reductions, thinning and logging, wildlife habitat restoration, etc.) would continue as deemed appropriate based on vegetation and resource conditions and in accordance with management objectives for this land allocation. Interpretation of the management and treatment strategies would be a part of these activities.

6. Mine Safety

The mine adit and vent shaft are currently open but are slated to be gated / grated and fenced in the fall 2001 with bat friendly grates.

D. Project Design Features

Project design features (PDFs) are included for the purpose of reducing adverse environmental impacts which might stem from implementation of the proposal. The PDFs noted below would be a part of all of the action alternatives.

1. Botanical Resource Protection

If localized erosion control is necessary, native plant species or sterile wheat grass would be used. Native vegetation would be allowed to reestablish itself on disturbed areas. If any Federal candidate, Bureau Sensitive or Survey and Manage plant species are encountered along the proposed trail location, the trail will be rerouted to avoid these populations.

2. Cultural Resource Protection

If cultural sites are found along the trail, mitigation measures such as rerouting the trail, would be implemented to protect the sites.

Chapter 3
Environmental Consequences

A. Introduction

Only substantive site specific environmental changes that would result from implementing the proposed action or alternatives are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered effects on that component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no effects. Similarly, unless addressed specifically, the following were found not to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality; cultural or historical resources; Native American religious concerns; prime or unique farmlands; endangered, threatened or sensitive plant, animal or fish species; water quality; floodplains, wetlands/riparian zones; wild and scenic rivers.

General or "typical" affects from projects similar in nature to the proposed action or alternatives are also described in the EISs and plans to which this EA is tiered.

B. Site Specific Beneficial or Adverse Effects of the Alternatives

1. Resource: Climate and Soils

a. Affected Environment

The project area is located within the Williams valley, with local climate being characterized as mild throughout the year. Annual precipitation is approximately 30 inches, with most occurring between November and March as rain. Snowfall is infrequent, very limited in depth and generally melts within a day or two. Temperatures may be in the teens at the coldest, but reach upwards of 100°F during the hottest of summer afternoons. Most winter days would be best described as cool and sometimes wet. The spring and fall is generally quite mild. Summer brings mild mornings and warm to hot afternoons.

Trail use could occur at any time of the year as weather conditions are frequently permitting and often inviting. However, major winter storms, abnormally heavy snowfall, periods of high wind, or the hottest of summer afternoons would tend to limit activity from both a physical and safety perspective. The proposed route remains in the shade of the conifer and hardwood canopy for greater than half the distance.

The trail is on low to moderate slopes and flats in the mid-valley portion of Williams Creek. The area is dominated by deep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained soils on low stream terraces, alluvial fans, and hillsides and in drainage ways. Soil on the 40-acre parcel is Holland sandy loam (42 C on the low slopes, and 42 D in the midslope position). This deep, well-drained soil on foot slopes of hills and ridges is formed in colluvium derived predominately from granitic rock. The erosion hazard is moderate to high under bare soil conditions. The 80-acre parcel has both the Holland sandy loam (42 D) and Selmac loam (68 B on low slopes). The Selmac loam is deep, moderately drained, and is formed in alluvium. Erosion hazard is low. For greater detail, refer to the Soil Survey to Josephine County.

b. Environmental Effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

Conditions may affect the soil resource or site climate should remain unchanged, unless vegetation is altered by wildfire, insects or disease, or some other natural event. This applies for both short (0 to 5 years) and long (5 to 20 years) terms. The area currently receives only an occasional visitor on foot whose use has left little or no evidence of soil impacts. Equestrian usage from contiguous private land occurs on the 80-acre parcel. Most of the horse trails occupy old road systems and have little or no sign of surface erosion. Public usage is rather limited due to the 80-acre parcel being somewhat land locked (e.g., have to cross private lands and fences to gain access). The 40-acre parcel, while flanked by Water Gap Road, has few safe pullouts for parking, and is bordered on all sides by private land. Further, the main portion south of Water Gap Road is vegetated with large dense manzanita. Long term human use would be expected to either remain at the current level or increase slightly.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Soil impacts from the proposed action should be negligible. On the adjacent Pacifica lands, old, steep tractor trails, roads, and recent constructed trails show little or no signs of erosion. Further, trail construction will be rolled and out-sloped, dipped for drainage, and the 36" tread covered with crushed rock. Where the trail enters the 80-acre parcel, Selmac soil is found. This soil is an excellent base for the trail, being well drained and of low erosion potential. The trail itself, designed with limited grades, located in favorable topographic positions, and on low to moderate side slopes would cause minimum, if any, erosion and runoff. Less than one percent of the land will be taken out of vegetative production by trail construction.

The constructed trail would encourage increased hiking use of the area. Construction would create a narrow strip where varying levels of vegetation clearing will occur. Increased use and trail maintenance will keep vegetation from encroaching on the trail tread. For the entire trail this would amount to less than an acre.

2. Resource: Water and Fisheries

a. Affected Environment

Two small streams traverse the BLM parcels (See Map 1). On the 40-acre parcel, Camp Meeting Creek runs west to east off the flanks of Pennington Mountain. The small, stream crosses Water Gap Road on the north edge of the parcel. It feeds into the 50-acre foot BLM/Pacifica reservoir (constructed 1962). The pond does not contain fish. The drainage has no easily identified continuity to Powell or Williams creeks, and has several constructed ponds along it's lower reach. Camp Meeting Creek does not support a fishery. For the 2000-2001 water year, there has been no observed flow. The riparian vegetation at the trail crossing upstream of the reservoir consists of mixed conifers and hardwoods. The riparian reserve width is 150 feet on both sides of the creek and 100 feet from the edge of the reservoir.

Pennington Creek, a much larger subwatershed of Williams Creek, flows west through the center of

the 80-acre parcel. While the creek would be classed as intermittent, it is more seasonal in character. It flows in response to periods of heavier precipitation, and in a year with above average precipitation, it could carry water for most of the time between November and April. However, during extended periods of no rain during winter, it occasionally will go dry. Pennington Creek did not flow from April of 2000 to present (summer, 2001). Its channel is relatively well shaded by tall conifers and hardwoods, but it has little true riparian vegetation. The channel is well armored by rock, and only occasional higher stream banks show signs of major storm flows and scour. The upper watershed is in relatively fair condition. Within the 80-acre BLM parcel, the creek has a 300-foot riparian reserve on both sides.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has recorded steelhead in Pennington Creek, which is the first small tributary of Williams Creek. Steelhead have been observed below the box culvert under Water Gap Road, which acts as a barrier to adult migration. Intermittent flows limit the ability of Pennington Creek to support fish in most years, however. Steelhead, especially the summer run, are adapted to use streams such as Pennington Creek when the flows permit.

b. Environmental consequences

1) Alternative 1: No Action

Under the no action alternative, the fishery, riparian vegetation, channel conditions and hydrologic function should remain nearly the same as today. The current decline of pine in the riparian reserve would continue. No change in water quantity, quality, or timing accompanies the alternative.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Based on the conditions described under the soil resource section above, the trail should have no effect on sediment delivery to the streams in the project area. Thus, there should be no impacts on water quality, quantity, or timing from the proposed action. Thus, no impacts to fish are anticipated. For Pennington Creek, the trail is located on the south side near the creek, but remains on the flats and does not cross the creek/channel.

The crossing of Camp Meeting Creek above the reservoir will be mitigated by an elevated path (See Project Design Features, item 5). Careful design and construction of the crossing of this small creek will preclude impacts and will be invaluable in the education and interpretative aspects of the trail itself. No impact on the reservoir or to the creek downstream is anticipated because construction will take place when the stream is dry.

There are no known cumulative effects to the watershed in terms of stream water quality and quantity, or fish habitat.

There is the potential for increased use around the BLM/Pacifica pond as an indirect effect of the proposed action. As this is area is near the trail head and just downstream from the trail crossing of Camp Meeting Creek, it likely will attract people who use the trail.

3. Resource: Vegetation (including botany and special status species)

a. Affected Environment

The vegetation on the two BLM parcels contains at least 3 distinct plant communities (series): Douglas-fir, Ponderosa pine, and white oak. Conifer stand age is approximately 140 years. There is no record of previous forest management on these lands. The 80 acre parcel located in the northeast portion of the section is stocked with trees of low vigor and exhibits declining growth in Douglas-fir and shows evidence of pine beetle activity. The 40 acre parcel in the southwest corner of the section contain a dense manzanita field (east of Water Gap Road) and an overstocked Ponderosa pine community (west of Water Gap road). Insect mortality is currently occurring in the pine due to pine beetle and the amounts of manzanita present east of the road are conducive to an intense fire event should ignition occur.

Current overstocked conditions are a direct result of fire exclusion from the project area. A review of the inventory records show that in 1916, the 80 acre parcel in the northeast of the section contained no merchantable timber and the primary vegetation was a dense cover of manzanita and ceanothus. The 40 acre parcel in the southwest had similar vegetation but included a small amount of vigorous Ponderosa pine. The fire hazard is high and the potential for a stand destroying fire for both parcels is high and increasing. The stands are currently overstocked and consequently of low vigor resulting in insect mortality in pine species (e.g., west of Water Gap Road). It will eventually occur in the Douglas-fir trees as well which will change the composition of the stands and add more fuels to the already heavy fuel loading in an area with high risk of ignition.

The two BLM parcels in the BLM/Pacifica Interpretive Trail project area was surveyed for special status vascular plants in April 2001. Non-vascular plants (lichens and bryophytes) were surveyed in May 2001. No Survey and Manage or Special Status plant species were found during these surveys.

Noxious weeds are a problem in the area where Pacifica is located; star thistle is prevalent in disturbed areas. A cooperative effort to control this species has been started by agencies and community members in the Applegate.

b. Environmental Consequences

1. Alternative 1: No Action

The vegetation would remain essentially as it currently is. The current successional and fuel hazard trends noted above would continue. Fire risk would remain at current levels.

2. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action (trail construction) would in itself have little effect on the current vegetation and fuel hazard conditions. A very small amount of vegetation would be cut during construction. Subsequent trail use will result in higher levels of use of these parcel than currently occurs leading to higher levels of fire risk.

The project's interpretive aspects will provide the potential for public education regarding forest processes, functions, and fire ecology. This could result in better community understanding of the need, the effects and the benefits of active forest management and an understanding of the consequences of not doing proactive forest management.

4. Resource: Wildlife (special status, S&M species and their habitats)

a. Affected Environment

Habitats located in the project area include low elevation coniferous forest, brush fields, oak woodlands and a small reservoir. Both BLM parcels provide optimal thermal cover for deer. A site containing a known day roost and hibernacula for Townsend's big-eared bats (*Corynrhinus townsendii*), a Bureau sensitive species and state of Oregon critical species, is located in the project area.

The 80 acre BLM parcel is potentially suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for northern spotted owls (*Strix occidentalis caurina*). The project area is also suitable habitat for the red tree vole (*Phenacomys longicaudus*), a survey and manage species, and for survey and manage molluscs. The 80 acre BLM parcel is also appears to be suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for the great gray owl (*Strix nebulosa*), although no surveys have been performed to confirm their presence or use of the site.

b. Environmental Consequences

This discussion of potential impacts focuses on the species noted above. It is based on the assumption that any potential habitat for one of these species is occupied. It is improbable that all areas identified as potential habitat would actually be occupied. Thus, the actual effects would be equal to or less to those discussed below.

1. Alternative 1: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the trail(s) on BLM land would not be built. Current successional trends in vegetation would continue. The area would continue to have relatively little visitation from humans and would remain relatively inaccessible. Areas containing high quality deer thermal cover as well as the mine containing the Townsend's big-eared bats would remain free from potential human disturbance associated with trail recreation. Current population trends for deer, bats and most species within the project area would most likely remain stable.

2. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action will remove only a small amount of vegetation from the immediate vicinity of the trail and ground disturbance would be restricted to the trail tread. It is not anticipated that the level of modification will reduce the effectiveness of potentially suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl. Similarly, the project would not adversely impact the Red Tree Vole as it will not alter the overstory conditions in potential habitat areas.

There would be only very minimal impacts to mollusc habitat due to the small scope of the project and extent of ground disturbance. This disturbance is not anticipated to result in the loss of the effectiveness of mollusc habitat. Based on this, surveys for mollusc and special mitigation measures were judged not to be necessary.

The project area provides optimal thermal habitat for black-tailed deer and the area receives high use. Increased human activity resulting from the trail development could lead to an increase in energy expenditures by animals avoiding people, thus having an adverse impact on individual animals. It may lead to a small population reduction in the project area but should have no impact at the regional level.

As noted above, a mine used as a day roost and hibernaculum by Townsend's big-eared bats is located in the 80 acre parcel. The project and subsequent use of the trails should not have any adverse impact on the local bat population as the trail is located sufficiently away from the mine.

The reservoir may have water for all or part of the year. It generally captures all of Camp Meeting Creek and receives a spring filling from the Messinger diversion on Powell Creek via a pipe to the reservoir. The water right deals primarily with irrigation, however, wildlife benefits accrue for a fair share of the year. Construction of the trail could lead to greater human use of the area which could result in trampling of shore vegetation and temporarily displacing wildlife species that use the pool as habitat as well as a source of drinking water.

In summary, the primary effect of the trail will be the potential increase in human activity in areas that currently receive little visitation. The flat to gentle slopes and associated forest, reservoir, and shrub habitats will be subjected to increased disturbance. The degree of disturbance will depend on frequency and magnitude of visitation. It is anticipated that the trail will receive use at almost any time of the year, with more use occurring during the weekends, spring, and fall. The areas of steep terrain, dense brush and poison oak will effectively limit use in the 40 acre parcel to the trail itself. The open forest conditions in the 80 acre parcel could encourage more activity off of the trail and thus more potential for disturbance of the owl species, if they in fact use this area. The actual or potential degree and consequence of disturbance is not known.

The 80 acre parcel provides habitat conditions that are comparable to other low elevation areas in the Williams Valley known to be occupied by great gray owls. Site specific surveys have not been conducted, however, and nesting, roosting or foraging use is not known. The relationship of this parcel to other sites in the Williams Valley occupied by GGOs sites is also not known. If the parcel is being used by GGOs, trail construction and subsequent use and disturbance could be detrimental to the owls resulting in nesting failures and owl displacement.

Proposed Mitigating Measure #1: Conduct GGO surveys according to protocol to determine if the project area is currently being used by great gray owls. If nesting GGOs are found within the 80 acre parcel, do not implement the proposed trail construction in this parcel and retain it as a designated GGO protection zone per RMP direction.

5. Resource: Recreation/Cultural/Social

a. Affected Environment

The proposed trail follows the perimeter of the old Messinger Ranch, a 1851 Donation Land Claim. Several remnants of old buildings are located around the property, along with the older and beautifully maintained Messinger home on adjacent private land (still in possession of decedents of the original homesteader). The area is easily accessed. Recreational use of the area is currently light.

Currently, visitors that wish to use these two parcels have little or no clear public access or parking. There is some trail use from the adjacent private properties including Pacifica. This use is incidental and casual, with little more than game trails and old tractor roads to follow when entering the wooded areas. The 80 acre BLM parcel has several paths and old mining roads which local residents use for horseback riding.

b. Environmental effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

Recreational use of the project area would continue to be light as there would be no change and no trail development. User impacts would continue to be dispersed throughout the area with multiple informal undesignated trails. Fire risk would remain as it currently is.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action should increase the overall level of recreational use, year around. Hiking opportunities would be provided along the interpretive trail. As the trail is designed for persons with disabilities, it also opens up an ecosystem and differing experience for those who have a greater difficulty in negotiating such areas. The broad array of educational features will capture many users of all age groups. This recreational opportunity would also provide access into some of the more unique spots for views and solitude.

Noise levels may increase with increased use. People will be more visible. Being able to see activity can often be more disconcerting for those who previously had a near pristine backyard view.

Fire risk would increase due to the anticipated increase of public use of these parcels.

Chapter 4
Agencies and Persons Consulted

A. Agencies and Persons Consulted

All input was considered by the planning and ID teams in developing the project proposal and in preparing this EA. Personnel from multiple agencies were consulted prior to preparation of this proposal:

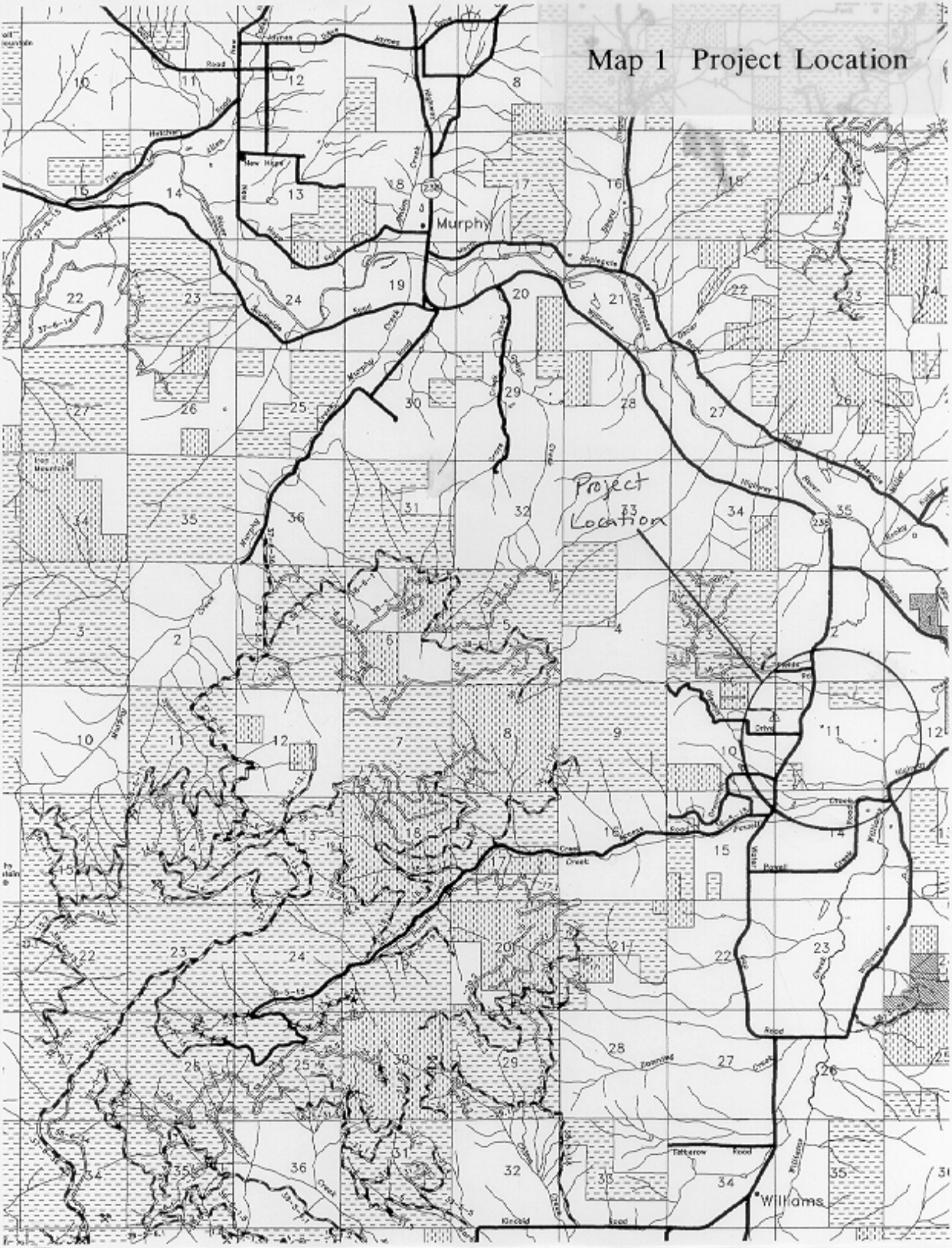
State of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
State of Oregon Forestry Department
Pacifica: A Garden in the Siskiyous
Joyce Messinger, adjacent landowner

B. Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

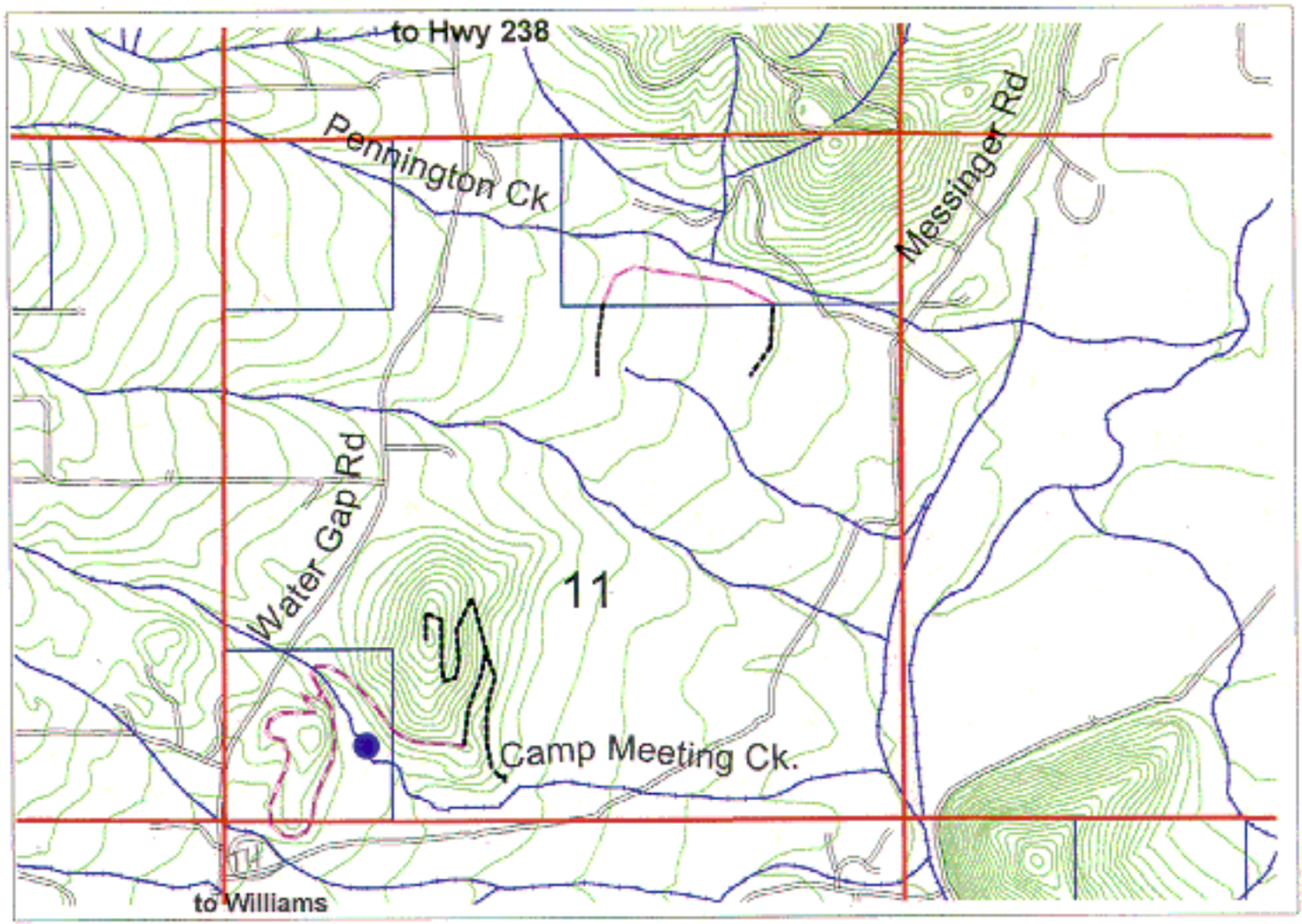
Copies of the EA document will be available for formal public review in the BLM Medford District Office. A formal 15 day public comment period will be held following an announcement in the Grants Pass Courier.

Appendix A
Project Maps

Map 1 Project Location



Proposed PacificaTrail



Legend

- Reservoir
- Pacifica trails
- Proposed trail
- Section lines
- BLM Ownership
- Streams
- Roads
- Contour

Appendix B
Issues and Alternative Considered but Eliminated From Detailed Analysis

1. Motorized use was considered but eliminated because the trail is designed for universal access and motorized use (except electric wheelchairs) would conflict with users with disabilities. The trail also accesses Pacifica property which is dedicated to educational endeavors and an arboretum and be detrimental to long term protection of the area.

2. Allowing overnight camping and campfires at the trail head parking area and along the trail route has similar adverse consequences as above, and adds the element of risk to the higher fuel hazard areas, the protection of the botanical and arboretum, and overall maintenance problems. Camping and fires are not compatible with the objectives of the area, which are to provide a day use area for interpretation and education.

3. Other access points were considered but eliminated at this time: Messinger Road and a trailhead on BLM in Section 11 (SW1/4SW1/4) and other access points within Pacifica property. These were eliminated from consideration based on the view that providing a single primary access point would better guarantee that sanitation problems, trash dumping, and undesirable use and/or occupancy would be avoided. As previously noted, public access from Messinger Road does not currently exist it was also eliminated based on concerns that the residents expressed during Pacifica's zoning change public review. The potential BLM trailhead noted may be developed in the future.

4. Proposed Mitigating Measure 1 - Options other than not constructing the trail were considered as potential mitigation. Alternative mitigation considered by no selected as part of the proposal include the following:

- Seasonally restrict use of the trail. This was not pursued due to difficulties of enforcement and the likelihood that it would, therefore, be ineffective in reducing potential owl disturbance.

- Signing of the trail to request that users stay on the trail in spite of the open nature of the terrain which invites off-trail exploration. This was not pursued due to difficulties of enforcement and the likelihood that it would, therefore, be ineffective in reducing potential owl disturbance.

- The potential for relocating the trail so as to discourage off-trail exploration was considered as a means of minimizing potential impacts to GGOs, should they be found to be present. No suitable route could be located that would accomplish this.

Appendix D
References Cited

Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation: A Design Guide (PLAE, Inc. 1993).

NRCS (SCS), 1983, Soil Survey of Josephine County, Oregon.